

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3415

INFO AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

USDEL JEC PARIS

CINCPAC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT VS

SUB: LOWER HOUSE PASSES BILLS ON POLITICAL PARTIES

AND PROVINCIAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. IN A TWO-DAY SESSION APRIL 3 AND 4, THE LOWER HOUSE PASSED TWO BILLS GOVERNING POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE UPCOMING PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS. BOTH BILLS NOW GO TO THE UPPER HOUSE, WHERE EARLY CONSIDERATION IS EXPECTED. MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE UPPER HOUSE WILL ACCEPT THE LOWER HOUSE VERSION OF EACH BILL AND SEND IT ON TO THE PRESIDENT.

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

2. TWO BILLS WERE RECENTLY INTRODUCED TO THE LOWER HOUSE CONCERNING THE PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS, UNCLASSIFIED

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SCHEDULED FOR THIS SUMMER, ONE SPONSORED BY PRO-ADMINISTRATION

LEGISLATORS AND THE OTHER BY OPPOSITION DEPUTIES. THE TWO BILLS DIFFERED CHIEFLY IN THAT THE OPPOSITION BILL RETAINED THE PREVIOUS SYSTEM WHEREIN THE DISTRICT WAS THE ELECTORAL CONSTITUENCY, WHEREAS THE ADMINISTRATION BILL ESTABLISHED EACH ELECTION ON A PROVINCE-SIDE OR MUNICIPALITY-WIDE BASIS. THE INTERIOR COMMITTEE OF THE LOWER HOUSE STUDIED BOTH BILLS BUT ACCEPTED ONLY THE PRO-ADMINISTRATION VERSION, AND THIS WAS THE ONLY ONE DEBATED AND VOTED IN THE PLEMNARY SESSION.

3. THE ADMINISTRATION BILL REPORTED BY THE INTERIOR COMMITTEE PASSED EASILY IN A SPARSELY ATTENDED SESSION. THE OPPOSITION DID NOT SHARPLY CHALLENGE IT, BUT THEY DID STRESS THE VIEW THAT THE COMMITTEE'S BILL GIVES PRO-ADMINISTRATION CANDIDATES AN ADVANTAGE BY ELIMINATING THE POSSIBILITY THAT AN OPPOSITIONIST WHO ENJOYS POPULARITY IN ONE DISTRICT COULD BE ELECTED. THE FINAL VOTE WAS 78 IN FAVOR, WHICH WERE ALL THE DEPUTIES PRESENT AT THE TIME.

4. AS PASSED, THE BILL PROVIDES FOR PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL COUNCILS RANGING FROM 6 TO 24 PERSONS DEPENDING ON THE POPULATION OF THE PROVINCE OR CITY CONCERNED. THE TOTAL NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS NATIONWIDE WAS REDUCED FROM 554 TO 471. THE ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD SUNDAY, JULY 14, 1974. THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE PRESENT COUNCILLORS WILL END AUGUST 15.

POLITICAL PARTIES

7. EIGHT PRO-ADMINISTRATION SENATORS AND DEPUTIES RECENTLY INTRODUCED A BILL TO AMEND DECREE-LAW 060 OF 1972 GOVERNING POLITICAL PARTIES. THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT CONSISTED SOLELY OF EXTENDING THE DEADLINE FOR A PROVISIONALLY RECOGNIZED PARTY TO MEET THE LAW'S QUALIFICATIONS FROM 12 MONTHS TO 24 MONTHS. (FORMALLY SPEAKING, THE AMENDMENT SOUGHT TO CHANGE LAW 9/69, THE EARLIER POLITICAL PARTY STATUE TO WHICH DECREE-LAW 060 WAS ITSELF AN AMENDMENT.)

6. OPPOSITION DEPUTIES TOOK THE OCCASION TO LAUNCH A WIDE-RANGING ATTACK ON DECREE-LAW 060 AND THE DEMOCRACY PARTY. ONE OPPOSITION SPEAKER CALLED THE GOVT "DICTATORIAL", WHICH A UNCLASSIFIED

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PRO-ADMINISTRATION DEPUTY COUNTERED BY SAYING THAT IF PRES THIEU REALLY WANTED TO KILL POLITICAL PARTIES AND MONOPOLIZE THE POLITICAL ARENA, THIS AMENDMENT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PUT FORWARD FOR DEBATE. APART FROM SOME EXCHANGES ALONG THESE LINES, THE DEBATE WAS NOT ACRIMONIOUS AND ENDED QUICKLY. THE BILL PASSED BY A VOTE OF 66 IN FAVOR. THERE WERE NO VOTES AGAINST, BECAUSE THE OPPOSITION BOYCOTTED THE FINAL VOTE.
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